



Black John - the Bogus Pirate



A Hiding Plaice!

By John Joyce

Avast there, Mateys! Over the next few issues we're going to look at the 'Masters of Disguise' of the underwater world. So keep your eyes peeled, and let's go . . . !



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When an animal is attacked by a predator it has three options – to escape, to fight and defend itself or to hide! Fast swimming marine fish such as tuna and mackerel move quickly through the water and simply speed away to escape predators. Animals with strong teeth, such as sharks, defend themselves by attacking. But many other marine animals have developed very sophisticated camouflage to merge almost seamlessly with their background and hide.

Flatfish, such as the Plaice can detect the colour of the sea floor where they are resting with such accuracy that they seem to merge with it and disappear. This ability is so sophisticated that these fish can mimic the black and white squares on a chessboard placed in their habitat and take on its black and white pattern. Many flatfish also use their fins to stir up the sand around them so that it settles on their

bodies, giving even more camouflage protection so that only their eyes, gills and mouth can be seen from above... and even then, only with careful observation.

Strangely, when larval plaice hatch from the egg their eyes are on opposite sides of the body, as they are in most fish. It is only later on in life, at around 40 days, that one eye migrates to the same side as the other, allowing the juvenile to settle onto the seafloor on one side while still looking upwards with both eyes.

Plaice stocks in the North Sea and Irish Sea account for 75% of the total European catch and are in no danger of being over-fished. In fact the numbers of adult plaice in the Central North Sea is currently at a record level, while the numbers of young plaice growing to catchable size last year (2019) has been estimated as the second highest ever recorded.

HOW TO DRAW A PIRATE



DRAW A
NICE BIG
NOSE



PUT IN
THE EYES



DRAW THE
BEARD AND
MOUTH



PUT IN THE
EYEBROWS
AND EARS



GIVE HIM A
NICE BIG HAT
AND KERCHIEF

Follow Black John the Bogus Pirate and his crew on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/BlackJohntheBogusPirate/>

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